Acting Edition

The Man

by James Graham

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE MAN was first produced by Whippet Productions and Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre, London, and premiered on May 25, 2010. The performance was directed by Kate Wasserberg, with design by Fly Davis, lighting by Tom White, and production photography by Matt Humphrey. The stage manager was Eleanor Randal. The cast was as follows:

BEN. . . . . Leander Deeny, George Rainsford
INLAND REVENUE . . . . . Michelle Luther, Stephanie Thomas, Lizzy Watts

CHARACTERS

BEN

INLAND REVENUE

AUTHOR'S NOTES

How the Play Works

As the audience enter, they are given a receipt at random that corresponds with the individual stories listed here in the text.

Following the opening exchange between Ben and the Inland Revenue, the actor playing Ben begins choosing receipts from the audience in a random order, performing the story that corresponds with that particular receipt. Consequently, no one show is ever the same.

As such, the *opening exchange* and the *final exchange* between Ben and the Inland Revenue are the only segments of the play whose position is guaranteed.

The couple of exchanges between Ben and the Inland Revenue that are not related to specific receipts must be added in by the actor whenever he sees fit within the journey of the performance.

'Helpful' Advice from The Original Performance

When *The Man* premiered at the Finborough Theatre, the actor(s) playing the Inland Revenue performed live as opposed to being a recorded voice. They sat within the audience – part of it, if slightly removed (i.e. to the side or to the back). This seemed to effectively contribute to the live, interactive feel of the 'event'.

As implied by the text, the Inland Revenue is more than a single character. There is 'Lisa', a woman to whom Ben speaks to the most, but also in one segment a suggestion that the Inland Revenue changes person during one of Ben's calls. As before, the original production placed a separate character in a different part of the audience.

All of this is up for grabs.

The presence of the Sainsbury's receipts should help to combat the unpredictability of audience size in any given show – i.e. once the number of 'key story' receipts have been taken up, extraneous Sainsbury's receipts can be handed out to all additional audience members. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a smaller audience can be given more than one receipt.

It's easier than it looks. And more fun, too.

James Graham

(Music plays as lights up on **BEN**, *staring out, awkwardly holding a handful of tax forms.*[*] *The songs fades from intro music, into the more tinny sound of 'on-hold' music, as* **BEN** *stands waiting for his call to be taken.)*

(The music cuts out.)

INLAND REVENUE. Hello, HM Revenue and Customs, Lisa speaking.

BEN. Oh, no it's me again, I'm still on hold.

INLAND REVENUE. It's who sorry?

BEN. Ben.

INLAND REVENUE. You've been transferred through to self employment.

BEN. Oh God, sorry, you sounded like the last girl. Woman.

INLAND REVENUE. That's OK. How can I help?

BEN. My tax return, I can't do it.

INLAND REVENUE. Can I take your name please?

BEN. Ben Edwards, eighth of the second, eighty-two, 54D Elmbourne Road, London SW17 1XT / United Kingdom.

INLAND REVENUE. Just your name is fine, actually.

BEN. Ben Edwards.

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INLAND REVENUE. And what's your tax reference number?

BEN. I don't know, that's what I'm ringing to find out.

INLAND REVENUE. It should be on your self-assessment form.

BEN. Well, erm, which one, I've got lots.

INLAND REVENUE. It should be on all of them, actually. Which one are you looking at now?

BEN. Uh. I dunno; white with green writing.

INLAND REVENUE. What number is it; the form?

BEN. Where's that number?

INLAND REVENUE. It should be just above your tax reference number.

BEN. ...right, but –

INLAND REVENUE. You know there's a series of numbers at the top of the form?

BEN. Yeah.

INLAND REVENUE. Read a couple of them out to me.

BEN. 0 – 8 – 4 – 5, 3 – 0 – 0 –

INLAND REVENUE. That sounds like the phone number you rang.

BEN. The ph– ...oh yeah.

INLAND REVENUE. Is your national insurance number there?

BEN. Yeah.

INLAND REVENUE. *(Pause.)* Can I have that then please?

BEN. 0 – 8 – 8 – 9 –

INLAND REVENUE. Sorry, it should start with two letters.

BEN. You said you wanted the number.

INLAND REVENUE. National insurance numbers are made up of letters and numbers, so if you –

BEN. No, I know, I wasn't being funny or – sorry, it's just I / can't stand these types of…

INLAND REVENUE. If you read out the whole thing then please?

BEN. Hold on, there's a number on the side, is that it?

INLAND REVENUE. That'll be the form you're holding; what's that number?

BEN. SA100-23F.

INLAND REVENUE. Right. OK. Well your unique reference number should be right at the top above your employer reference but below your national insurance number.

BEN. Below the… *(Hold.)* …right, 919 01 XP3504.

(Waits.) Hello?

INLAND REVENUE. I'm just processing that now, sir.

BEN. Oh no sorry I thought you might have been cut off, I wasn't being rude.

Is it raining in Wrexham?

INLAND REVENUE. No. Is it raining in London?

BEN. No.

Why am I with the / Wrexham office –?

INLAND REVENUE. OK, I've got your details up, Mr. Edwards, how can I help?

BEN. I've got stuck on my self-assessment form.

INLAND REVENUE. Oh. Nice and early. If you file online it doesn't have to be with us until the thirty-first of next January.

BEN. No I'm not doing it online, I'm doing the paper one.

INLAND REVENUE. We do recommend filing / online, Mr. Edwards –

BEN. No I can't, I just can't, I'm not doing it online.

INLAND REVENUE. OK. So you're stuck; how far have you got, which question?

BEN. Question one.

INLAND REVENUE. Que– … 'Name'?

BEN. No, on my form, the red page with 'Employment' at the top, it says to write down how much I earned from either my P45 or my P60.

INLAND REVENUE. Right.

BEN. Well. Which one? P45 or P60?

INLAND REVENUE. Whichever one you've got.

BEN. I've got both.

INLAND REVENUE. One must be out of date.

BEN. They've both got the same date on.

INLAND REVENUE. There must be a mistake.

BEN. Well you sent them to me. Do you see what I mean; do you see why I'm confused?

INLAND REVENUE. What are the amounts on each of them?

BEN. There aren't any.

INLAND REVENUE. There aren't any?

BEN. No, there are – …I haven't had any regular employed work.

INLAND REVENUE. Then you don't need to fill that in, just go straight to the self-employment section, OK?

BEN. OK. And that's just the next page is it?

INLAND REVENUE. Yes. And that should all be fine, OK? Anything else I can help you with?

BEN. I don't think so.

INLAND REVENUE. All right, then. Well, you've been speaking / to Lisa, and –

BEN. Hold on, wait, don't go, I'm stuck again.

INLAND REVENUE. OK.

BEN. Question one on *this* page; business name. I don't have a business name.

INLAND REVENUE. You're self employed, correct?

BEN. Yes.

INLAND REVENUE. So you are your business, basically. You just have to write in your name.

BEN. Ben Edwards?

INLAND REVENUE. Yes. That's the name of your business.

BEN. Huh. My name is the name of a business.

INLAND REVENUE. Yes.

BEN. *(Smiles.)* That's pretty… *(Stops smiling.)* …scary.

INLAND REVENUE. You'll be fine, I'm sure.

BEN. …Yeah? I get so…nervous about these things. They. Erm. Upset me. A little bit. I'm not used to them.

INLAND REVENUE. Some people do find them a little stressful.

BEN. Do they? Other people?

INLAND REVENUE. Yes, that's why we're here. To guide you through the form.

BEN. To 'gui–' …OK.

INLAND REVENUE. Oh, look at that. Huh. Outside. It's just started to rain…

BEN. …has it?

INLAND REVENUE. Yeah. Just a little bit. And I didn't bring my umbrella.

BEN. Oh no.

INLAND REVENUE. That's all right, I only have to run out to the car.

BEN. What car do you drive?

INLAND REVENUE. Just a little Peugeot 206.

BEN. What colour?

INLAND REVENUE. Blue.

BEN. What engine?

INLAND REVENUE. Ooh crikey, now you're asking. Er, 13… 1360? I think. CC. Or something.

BEN. Right.

INLAND REVENUE. How about you?

BEN. Oh no, I don't drive, don't know anything about cars.

INLAND REVENUE. Oh OK.

BEN. Can't make out anything you just told me, actually. 'Cept maybe blue.

INLAND REVENUE. *(Laughs.)* Right.

BEN. *(Laughs.)* Huh.

INLAND REVENUE. OK. Well do contact us again with any other queries –

BEN. Will I come back to you?

INLAND REVENUE. Not necessarily, there are quite a lot of us.

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